

WOMEN & REENTRY

A Snapshot of National and Local Data and A Spotlight on Efforts in Philadelphia

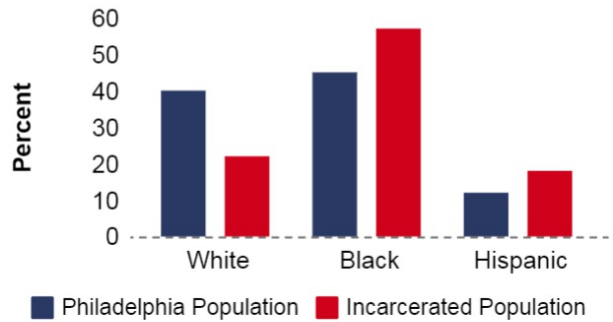
BY THE NUMBERS

Women are a minority in the criminal justice system, but the **rate of growth** for female imprisonment has been over 50% faster than that of men between 1980 and 2014 (1).

Similar to the population of incarcerated men, the rate of incarceration among women varies disproportionately across race and ethnicity.

In 2014 there were more than 215,000 incarcerated women in the U.S. (2). Black women were incarcerated at more than 2 times, and Hispanic women were incarcerated at 1.2 times, the rate of imprisonment of white women (3). A similar disparity exists in Philadelphia. While the city's female population is 40% white, 45% black, and 12% Hispanic, the female population in Philadelphia jails is 22% white, 57% black, and 18% Hispanic(4).

Racial Makeup of Incarcerated Women in Philadelphia



As of June 9, 2017 there were 565 women in the custody of the Philadelphia Department of Prisons. 68% were under the age of 40 (5).

WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS

The demographic of women in jails mirrors that of men in jails. For example, both are predominantly poor and low income (6), although women are more often primary caregivers to young children.

Approximately **80%** of women incarcerated in jails in the U.S. are mothers, often single parents (7). This means that women are often leaving behind networks of people who rely on them. "Women are the queen bees," says People's Paper Coop Lead Fellow Faith Bartley. "They support so many people in our community. When you lock anyone up it affects so many others, this is especially true with women."

Women incarcerated in Philadelphia jails have an average of 2.4 children (8). Pregnant incarcerated women face further challenges when they return. The Maternity Care Coalition notes this challenge, "reentry support services for pregnant and parenting women are especially important because the responsibility of caring for a baby or toddler can be an additional risk factor for recidivism. Positive ties to children potentially serve a unique protective function for mothers during reentry given mothers' concerns about their children and their desire to be a role model for their children."

"Women are the queen bees. They support so many people in our community. When you lock anyone up it affects so many others, this is especially true with women."

**- Faith Bartley,
People's Paper Coop
Lead Fellow**

SOURCES:

- 1 The Sentencing Project. "Incarcerated Women and Girls" November 2015.
- 2 The Sentencing Project. "Incarcerated Women and Girls" November 2015.
- 3 The Sentencing Project. "Incarcerated Women and Girls" November 2015.
- 4 Philadelphia Department of Prisons via the Office of Criminal Justice, retrieved June 2017
- 5 Philadelphia Department of Prisons via the Office of Criminal Justice, retrieved June 2017
- 6 Vera Institute of Justice. "Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform". August 2016
- 7 Vera Institute of Justice. "Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform". August 2016
- 8 Philadelphia Department of Prisons, February 2017

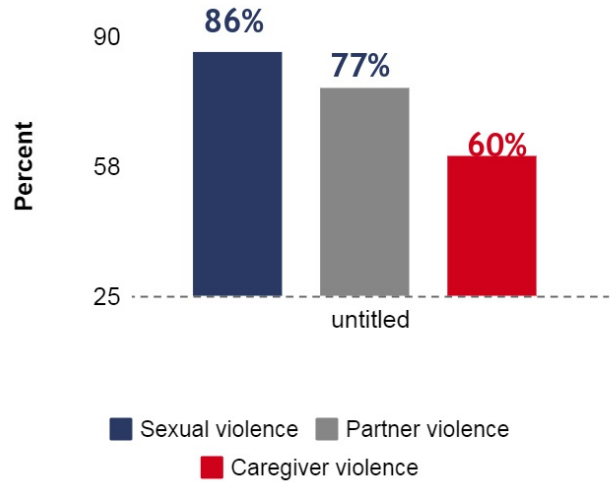
EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA

A vast majority of women entering the criminal justice system are survivors of violence and trauma.

Across the country, 86% of incarcerated women in jails have experienced sexual violence, 77% have experienced partner violence, and 60% have experienced caregiver violence (9).

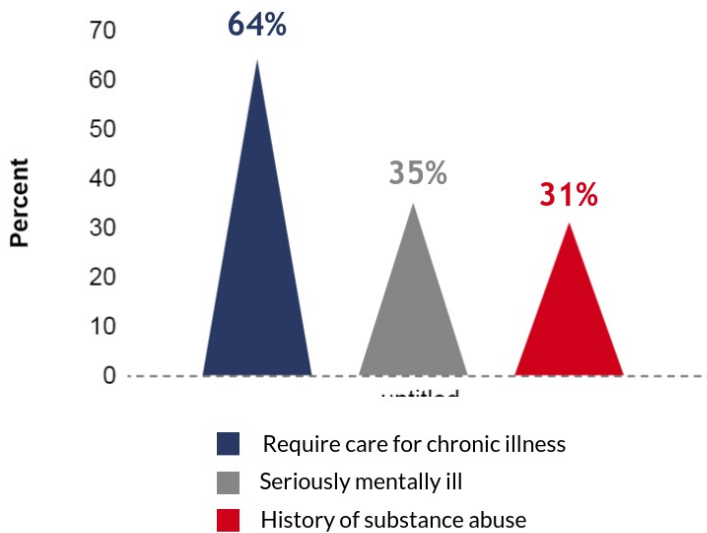
Criminal justice system practices and policies are often not designed specifically for women, who are a minority among incarcerated individuals. The high rate of trauma among incarcerated women creates the need for a multitude of resources and support services. However, jails are often “ill-equipped to address the challenges women face when they enter the justice system” (10). Frequently these challenges are exacerbated when women leave the criminal justice system.

Incarcerated Women Who Have Experienced Violence



HEALTH

Health Concerns for Incarcerated Women in Philadelphia



National studies show that of women incarcerated in jails, 53% have medical problems, 32% have a serious mental illness, 82% are struggling with drug or alcohol abuse/dependence (11). Of the 596 women incarcerated in Philadelphia jails in February 2017, 64% required care for a chronic illness, 35% were seriously mentally ill, and 31% had a history of substance abuse (12). Often they do not get sufficient care while incarcerated and “many women leave jail with diminished prospects for physical and behavioral health recovery, with greater parental stress and strain, and in even more financially precarious circumstances than before becoming caught up in the justice system” (13).

“Without the proper trauma interventions and appropriate supports, women are greatly disadvantaged when released from the criminal justice system.”

- Petrena Young, I'm FREE

SOURCES:

- 9 Vera Institute of Justice. “Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform”. August 2016
- 10 Vera Institute of Justice. “Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform”. August 2016
- 11 Vera Institute of Justice. “Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform”. August 2016
- 12 Philadelphia Department of Prisons, as of February 2017
- 13 Vera Institute of Justice. “Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform”. August 2016

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In the face of the realities that women in the criminal justice system face, agencies across Philadelphia work to provide services to incarcerated women as well as to women reentering society once they have been released. These Philadelphia Reentry Coalition members describe their work.



Ardella's House is a transitional program that helps currently and formerly incarcerated women assess their strengths and needs while guiding them as they think about their goals and how to reach them. Individualized support addresses immediate needs and a woman's history and goals related to livelihood, housing, health and well-being, family reunification, and criminal justice compliance.

Coming Home to Continued Care facilitates the healthcare side of reentry, helping women in Riverside Correctional Facility obtain Medicaid, schedule their initial doctor's appointments, and arrange for transportation to those appointments. We also partner with the PA Prison Society to provide bi-monthly educational sessions on different health topics by bringing in health professionals from the community.



I'm FREE (Females Reentering Empowering Each Other) was created with trauma-impacted women's specific needs in mind to help incarcerated women transition back into society with trauma-informed coaching, training, and care services. A multi-week empowerment training taught in the jails and community corrections facilities focuses on a woman's trauma and recovery. Through our personal development training, women change the way they think and respond to certain situations and gain vital life and social skills to assist in their reintegration process.

Maternity Care Coalition runs the MOMobile at Riverside®, to improve the health of pregnant and postpartum incarcerated women and their babies, and help women acquire the resources and parenting skills they need to establish healthy families as they make the transition from prison to home. It is the only program of its kind in Pennsylvania, services are pre-and post-release, and staff are case managers, home visitors and trained doulas.



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The People's Paper Co-op

The People's Paper Co-op (PPC) is a women-led, women-focused art and advocacy project at the Village of Arts and Humanities. The PPC works with women in reentry to co-run a creative business (helping develop job readiness skills), and create public advocacy projects to support people in reentry, including a resource guide for women in Philly's halfway houses, treatment centers, and prisons, created by women in reentry.

Why Not Prosper

Why Not Prosper empowers women in the prison system to discover their own strength and become responsible, economically self-sufficient and contributing members of the community. Founded in 2000 by Reverend Michelle Simmons, a formerly incarcerated woman with a deep understanding of the needs of women in prison, the organization provides pre-release mentoring, a resource center, and a transitional living program.



Working groups coordinated by the **Pennsylvania Prison Society** work together to advocate for policy changes that positively impact incarcerated women.

Working Together for Women is a collaboration between **Caring Together** and **Mothers in Charge**. The program is a trauma-informed, substance use and mental health service designed specifically for women being released from incarceration or other institutional settings. The program benefits from the clinical expertise of a female-specific addiction and mental health treatment program and the cognitive skills training and home/community-based case management approach provided by the program.

Email philareentrycoalition@gmail.com for contact information for any of these programs.

